

PRESS RELEASE

# Baker-Polito Administration Awards Grants to Design Career Programs for People with Disabilities Receiving Public Assistance

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Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

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**BOSTON** — Organizations in Boston and Franklin will each receive \$25,000 to design career pathway programs for unemployed or underemployed young adults with disabilities who receive public assistance, the Baker-Polito Administration announced today in awarding grants through the Learn to Earn (LTE) initiative. LTE seeks to support individuals who are receiving assistance from public benefit programs in gaining and retaining employment in occupations for which employers have persistent demand.

Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) in Boston and Horace Mann Educational Associates (HMEA) in Franklin will work with partners to prepare young adults ages 17 to 30 with a documented disability for jobs in the food service and hospitality industry. HMEA will specifically focus on individuals with diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

LTE is a comprehensive approach designed to test approaches for minimizing the real or perceived potential impact of increased earned income on benefit receipt, including improving coordination across benefit programs and reducing benefit cliff effects. These two new pilots will join five existing pilots that have been engaged in this work for the last year.

“These programs lower the barriers that that young adults face in seeking employment, while ensuring they continue to receive the support they need,” **said Governor Baker**. “In addition to empowering participants and their families, this initiative also supports Massachusetts businesses who need skilled workers to continue to grow.”

**“Learn to Earn demonstrates how the state can bring together community organizations and businesses to cooperatively address the issues that our citizens face and develop new pathways that can serve as a model to others,”** ()said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito.

The LTE pilot programs are funded through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF), which is administered by Commonwealth Corporation on behalf of the Workforce Skills Cabinet and the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD). LTE leverages the WCTF’s regional industry sector partnership model and adds financial coaching, family-focused supports and benefits counseling.

JVS will provide training for positions such as: food services assistant; room service assistant; prep cook; bakery team member; prepared foods team member; specialty foods team member, server; and tray-line. JVS' partners include Spaulding Rehabilitation Network, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, NewBridge on the Charles/Hebrew Senior Life, Whole Foods Market, and the MassHire Downtown Boston Career Center.

HMEA will provide training for positions such as: kitchen helper and assistant; line cook; prep cook; grill cook general; and food service worker. HMEA's partners include Sodexo USA, Cumberland Farms, Worcester Public Schools, Work Without Limits, Central Massachusetts Employment Collaborative, MassHire Central Workforce Board, and MassHire Central Career Center.

LTE was designed by the Secretariats of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Economic Development to align education, economic development, and workforce policies in order to address structural barriers and disincentives to work that often impede economic stability.

"Learn to Earn tackles the 'benefit cliff' issue by coordinating our efforts and enabling people to take that step onto rewarding career paths that lead to long-term economic stability," said Commonwealth Corporation President and CEO Dr. J.D. LaRock.

The Learn to Earn Interagency Work Group and Commonwealth Corporation received eight proposals for this funding cycle and awarded the two Program Design grants totaling \$49,994.57. Program Design grants will be awarded for approximately three months, followed by program Implementation grants of up to 2 years for an additional total of \$600,000; they are not re-occurring.

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